

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 201475

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M LSEAGLBURGER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AINF, OGEN, PINS, UK

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR DOCUMENT UNDER FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT

FOR THE AMBASSADOR ONLY FROM THE ACTING EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

1. DIRECTOR OF FOI AND SECURITY REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF DEFENSE HAS SENT DEPARTMENT A MEMORANDUM CONCERNING
THE REQUEST OF WILLIAM BEECHER, DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT
OF THE BOSTON GLOBE, FOR ALL FILES AND INVESTIGATIVE
RECORDS PERTAINING TO HIM. AMONG THE DOCUMENTS ENCOUNTERED
BY DEFENSE IN CONSIDERING THIS REQUEST IS A COPY OF A
SEPTEMBER 17, 1969, MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD PREPARED BY
YOU AS UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE. THE DEPARTMENT'S REVIEW
OF THE MEMORANDUM AND ADVICE AS TO ITS DECLASSIFICATION

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 201475

AND RELEASABILITY IS REQUESTED. MR. BEECHER IS ADVISED

HE WILL HEAR FROM US AS TO WHETHER OR NOT HE MAY HAVE A COPY OF THE MEMORANDUM.

2. IN VIEW OF THE CONTENT AND LIMITED DISTRIBUTION OF THE MEMORANDUM, WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS AS TO POSSIBLE RELEASE. THE FULL TEXT OF THE MEMORANDUM IN QUESTION FOLLOWS:

BEGIN QUOTE: MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD: RE: LOOK ARTICLE ON VERIFICATION: (SECRET-EYES ONLY)

SY WEISS INFORMED ME ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1969, THAT HE HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY WILLIAM BEECHER, NEW YORK TIMES WASHINGTON BUREAU MAN ASSIGNED TO THE PENTAGON, WHO HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED BY LOOK MAGAZINE TO WRITE AN ARTICLE ON VERIFICATION PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH SALT. BEECHER HAS GOOD PENTAGON CONTACTS, WEISS SAID, AND HAD ALREADY GOTTEN A GOOD DEAL OF GENERAL INFORMATION FROM PEOPLE OVER THERE, BUT WANTED TO TALK TO SOMEONE IN STATE WHO COULD HELP HIM OBTAIN A "BALANCED" POINT OF VIEW ON THE SUBJECT.

BECAUSE OF THE OBVIOUS SENSITIVITY OF THE MATTER, WEISS SOUGHT GUIDANCE AS TO WHAT REPLY HE SHOULD MAKE TO BEECHER.

I THEN CALLED HENRY KISSINGER TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION WITH HIM, AND IT WAS OUR TENTATIVE CONCLUSION THAT IT WOULD BE BEST TO HAVE BEECHER TALK TO SOMEONE OUTSIDE STATE OR ACDA AND NOT IN A POSITION TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT WHAT HE SAID REPRESENTED ALREADY DETERMINED POLICY FOR SALT. GERRY SMITH AND I WERE EXCLUDED ON THE FIRST BASIS AND HENRY HIMSELF ON THE SECOND, AND THAT LEFT LARRY LYNN AS THE BEST PERSON FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.

IN A LATER CONVERSATION ON SEPTEMBER 9 I TALKED AGAIN WITH HENRY KISSINGER, AND WE AGREED THAT THIS WAS A SOUND CONCLUSION NOT REQUIRING REFERENCE TO THE PRESIDENT. I THEN CALLED DAVID PACKARD TO ACQUAINT HIM WITH THE SITUATION. AS IT HAPPENED, HE WAS DUE TO SEE BEECHER
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 201475

THAT AFTERNOON, AND WE AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR HIM TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT OF VERIFICATION WITH BEECHER IN BROAD TERMS, EMPHASIZING THAT THE FINAL DOD POSITION WILL BE TAKEN BY THE SECRETARY OR HIMSELF AND THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS TO BE SURE THAT ALL POSSIBILITIES ON PROBLEMS ARE EXPOSED.

I THEN CALLED GERRY SMITH, WHOSE REACTION WAS THAT AN

ARTICLE ON VERIFICATION WOULD INEVITABLY CREATE PROBLEMS
AND URGED THAT WE TRY TO PERSUADE THE LOOK PUBLISHERS
TO CANCEL IT.

THIS SUGGESTED TO ME THAT I SHOULD CONTACT HERB KLEIN,
WHICH I DID BY PHONE ON SEPTEMBER 9. HE FELT THAT IT
WOULD BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO PERSUADE LOOK NOT
TO RUN THE ARTICLE SINCE MANY ASPECTS OF THE SUBJECT ARE
ALREADY IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND SINCE IT IS ONE ON WHICH

THERE IS A LEGITIMATE NEED FOR BROADER PUBLIC UNDERSTAND-
ING. WE CONCLUDED ALSO THAT IT WOULD NOT BE DESIRABLE
TO TRY TO INSIST ON THE RIGHT TO SEE THE ARTICLE BEFORE
IT APPEARED SINCE THIS WOULD MEAN THAT WE WOULD NOT BE
IN A POSITION TO CONTRADICT OR QUALIFY IT AFTER IT
APPEARED. OUR ONLY REAL OPPORTUNITY, THEREFORE, TO
EXERCISE ANY INFLUENCE ON THE TONE OR CONTENT OF THE
ARTICLE DEPENDS ON LYNN'S CONVERSATION WITH BEECHER.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONCLUSIONS SET FORTH ABOVE, I HAVE
ASKED GERRY SMITH AND RON SPIERS TO MAKE SURE THAT
THEIR PEOPLE DO NOT DISCUSS THE SUBJECT WITH BEECHER.

ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON. END QUOTE

3. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS AT YOUR EARLIEST
CONVENIENCE. MAW

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